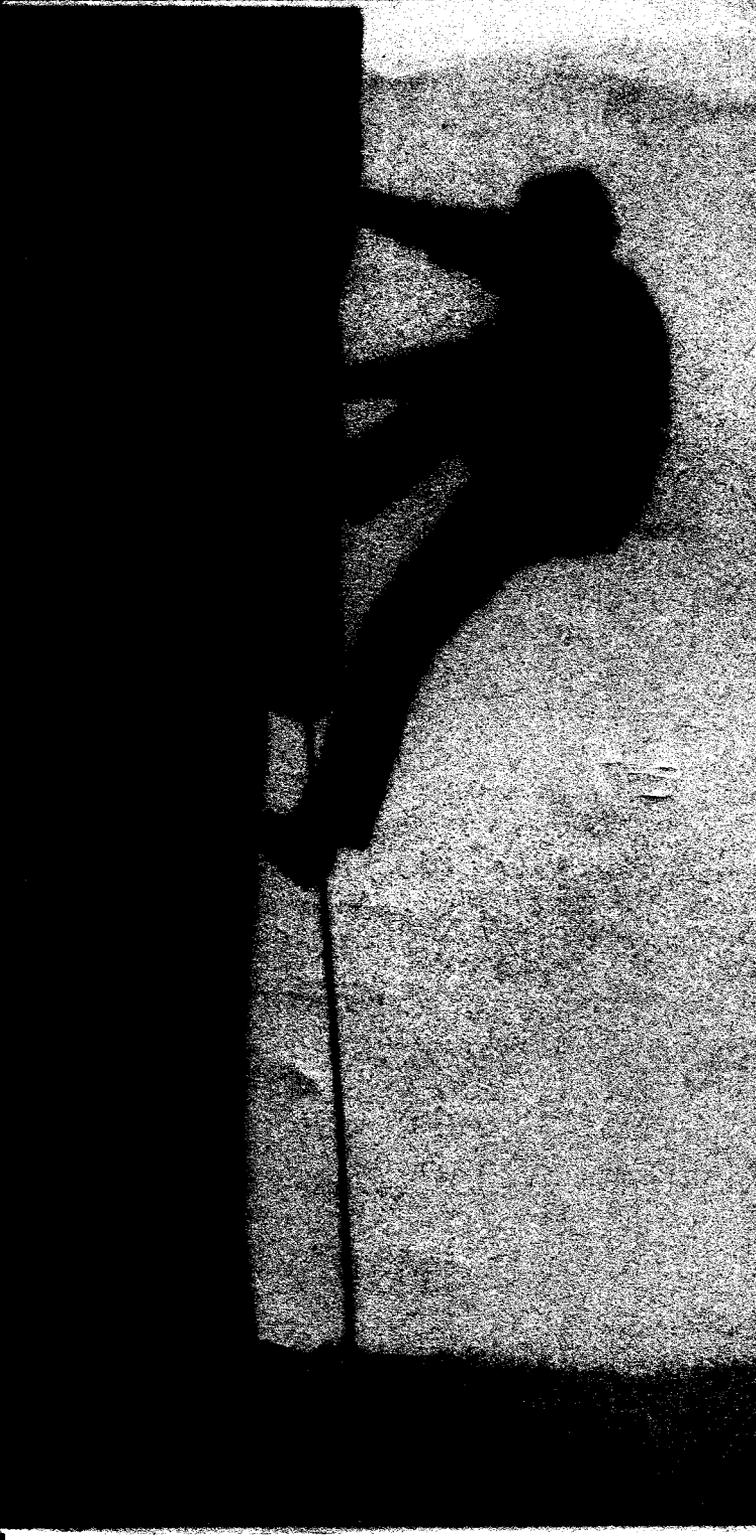


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Editor: B. Martin

EDITORIAL

Once again the club faces a crisis, due to the condition of your hut Tyn-Lon. The recent high winds have revealed that the state of the roof is even worse than people thought. You are faced with having to replace the complete roof within the next year or so. The hut wardens rough estimate for having the job done by a builder is £1,500, other estimates vary. It is no doubt possible for you to carry out the work yourselves, but it would be very awkward, as it is hardly a weekend job, even if done in sections. The first problem is how to raise money, and I'm sure the Committee, and John Pettet, who is taking a special responsibility for fund raising, will welcome any sensible suggestions.

Hut fees at present being charged are as follows:

Members	-	45p per night
Prospective members	-	60p per night
Guests	-	75p per night
Day charge	-	25p
Camping	-	same as sleeping inside

The sum of £54 has been received, from insurance, to meet the cost of recent gale damage.

In case anyone hasn't heard. the Club Dinner this year is at the 'Vic' in Llanberris on March 20th, £3.25 each.

The A.G.M. is at the Prince of Wales on Wednesday, 24th March at 8.00 p.m. Only paid up members can vote.

Now, after all that, for those in escapist mood, straight onto this issues star article.

O SOLO MEO

BY BOB MILLWARD ALIAS CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

The two Everest bound Superstars stalked off into the distance with a cheery wave and a cry of good luck. At least they had been more charitable than most about my plans, after all I suppose it is not the done thing to solo one's first rock climb on the Ben, especially in winter. This was borne out by the 50 lb. sack of gear which ranged from ice axe and screws to PA's and sky hooks.

Conditions were perfect with the snow down 500 ft. below the buttress and the weather set fair, windless and cold.

A superb stretch of grade 3 ice up the preliminary rocks, and the impressive corners of Centurion reared overhead. The climb had originated as a nice idea, conceived as a sort of test of mental stamina, but it was a personal theory to be tested in private and the big hidden corner was a perfect base for operations.

After some food, the world's most complicated and lethal protection system was put into operation as perfected on a 20 ft. gritstone diff. The battle got off to a flying start: I fell off. Crawling out of a snowdrift I began again and succeeded in reaching a position where falling off ceased to be an attractive proposition. From then on the climbing set the style for the whole weekend. Move up as far as possible, adopt some excruciating position with one hand screwed into a crack while the hammer in the other strips ice and snow; stick the hammer into something out of harm's way and repeat the process. This formula worked well up the deceptively steep first pitch until the hammer disappeared from view.

The next ten minutes were spent trying to persuade the mountain to regurgitate the contents of a deep crack. At length I gained the hammer and the belay. A free abseil followed with the first of the weekend's 1,200 ft. of prussiking. With the sack installed at the belay, the next pitch began with a superb ribbon of snow and ice in the corner of a huge slab. In places the odd step kicked into the corner was used quickly, never knowing quite whether rock or snow was responsible for support. It was pure enjoyment. I burst into song and snatches of Verdi echoed up and down the corner.

All too soon the slab came to an end and the overhangs refused to be ignored any longer. There was no choice, with the angle at the vertical the ice had to be cleared until there was sufficient rock to climb. The problem was the same as with the first pitch, only harder. When resting on a nut one cannot reach far enough to clear

new ground, so basically it had to be cleared and climbed free with frequent rests for the circulation of hot blood from burning calf muscles to frozen hands.

One section was verglass covered, requiring dozens of tiny pick point hammer blows to clear even the smallest hold. Eventually the rock forced a wholesale standing in slings for several moves, but with about fifteen feet to go the crack grew beyond my range of nuts.

A lot of power and some fierce fist jams and I landed at the belay ledge, white from head to foot, grovelling about in 18" of snow. Eventually a block and three geriatric pegs were revealed and a degree of composure regained.

After the drudgery of the abseil and a long free prussik, came a short traverse across the steep left wall. All went comfortably free, until half way across. The cold and snow had finally got through causing one hand to fold up with cramp. This was easily solved by opening the fingers with the teeth.

When the supply of runners and good holds ran out it was less easily rectified, and resulted in one of those unforgettable situations: spreadeagled and so nearly falling backwards, scared of blinking, a sneeze would bring disaster. I remained for an eternity with one hand free to polish the bald rock in a vain search for inspiration. I have no recollection of moving anywhere, but a little later I found myself climbing an easy groove requiring great concentration to ignore the pain of a hand re-awakening with a touch of frostbite. A few feet higher the other arm doubled up with cramp and for the next twenty feet progress was made with it extended rigidly upwards.

"Please Sir, can I be excused?" the thought was not inappropriate.

An alarmingly unprotected traverse across the very lip of a huge overhang and another snowed up belay was reached.

Feeling distinctly cold and damp, the climb had ceased to be enjoyable. 4.15, another pitch and the ropes wouldn't reach the ground. The most I could hope for would be two pitches, and a bivouac only 300 or 400 feet up would feel a bit silly. With that I started the descent leaving a fixed rope. A pang of conscience, then "Stuff ethics, the day you start climbing for other people's benefit is the time to chuck it. The rock will still be here, and at least there are no new peg marks."

With that thought for the day I hid the gear and descended for a chat with the C.I.C. hut warden. As the hut was bursting at the

seams I was soon on my way back to the valley. In the pub, my protection method was shot to pieces by a friend which strengthened my belief in the old axiom, "the leader never falls".

A late start saw me again setting off, cursing the flaming ropes - surely honour was satisfied? - why had I left them there? A cold, calm night had left the ropes in pristine condition and 1.00 p.m. found me inspecting the next pitch using an amended protection system. Pitch four, the final corner and traverse to escape from the vertical diedre system onto the central slabs. A surprisingly sustained piece of poorly protected bridging between an ice plated slab and a snow coated corner had legs and feet screaming, the muscles red hot, aching for rest.

The traverse looked wild so I set out with every intention of fiddling the lot. It posed problems. The snow and ice on the holds was cold and hard enough to require a hammer to move it, and the rock steep enough to necessitate a sling to sit in while doing so.

Things got quite exciting when a nut pulled out resulting in a very fast move to a previous sling. Conscious of the fact that I had not batted an eyelid I continued, but all good things come to an end. So did the slings. With a deep breath and a bunch of slack I committed myself, and soon emerged on the rib in a position of breathtaking exposure. A dozen easy feet of pure fun and a belay arrived. The whole angle eased off: escape at last from the dreaded diedre. My spirits soared and burst out in song.

"O Solo Meo" rang round the cliffs confirming the doubts about my sanity and parentage being expressed among the little knot of people outside the hut far below.

A hilarious abseil followed. The belay was too low to retrieve the gear from the traverse so I swung about, abseiling and prussiking in three directions at once, and finally with a cry of "the bells, the bells", careered out of the corner on a tangle of ropes like some demented Quasimodo.

The next pitch provided a rude awakening; the "easy angled slabs" had several clean bulging rock overhangs with every weakness filled and sealed smooth and white. Crampons would have been easier, but with a desire for protection I stuck to boots and excavation. The style was pure ad lib: wedged in a bulging chimney I saw a sloping projection and thinking of the superior friction of wool on snowy rock, I threw my leg over it to obtain a thigh hold. Ten foot higher for similar reasons, came a whole passage of knee to knee bridging.

"Look Mummy no feet". Whoever said you should not use knees must have had a very restricted leg technique.

At this point I noticed some larger than usual red spots on the snow. Inspection revealed a correspondingly larger than usual lump of knuckle missing.

"Never mind Paddy it'll soon freeze up and now all we've got to do is follow the red marks to the top."

After further highly unorthodox procedures the red spots lead to a belay, where, after counting three identical rope ends tied to my waist I concluded that either someone had joined me when I was not looking, or I had dragged a 75 ft. loop up the pitch. The whole escapade was rapidly becoming farcical.

Regaining some semblance of order the next pitch was a breakthrough - it was easy! As it was now quite late the final tier of overhangs was ignored in favour of "Route I or II: out right and up the edge". This comprehensive route description was obtained the previous night just before chucking out time. The traverse went without problems, but the first pitch up the edge turned into a flight with a sea of powder snow on iced rock. After the ritual abseil and prussik in gathering darkness, the rope jammed. I treble checked the belay, then threw a tantrum, jumped up and down, gesticulating wildly, cursing, screaming and shouting.

Refreshed by the break I settled back into control and set about the extra abseil. This time I regained the belay staggering about, dizzy with exhaustion. A Mars bar was digested so quickly it might as well have been administered intravenously. Resuming rope hauling, they jammed again. I was not amused . . . Thankfully, after some fiddling, the ropes came free, but by this time it was dark.

Far below, the inquisitive lights at the hut winked their last messages of warmth and shelter and it only took another Mars bar to persuade me to continue by torchlight. On the move again with fuel on board, the darkness felt warm and cosy. All went well until I found myself on a bad peg, in an overhanging corner and obviously off route. Then the light went out. Down to the belay yet again for a new bulb (and a Mars bar). The return prussik provided entertainment when the peg grew tired and lay down, turning through a rightangle in the process. Two pegs later, a hard slippery exit lead to easier climbing, and presently to my great relief, the top. Nailing some scree together I roped down for the sack (and another Mars bar), finally leaving the belay for the fifth time.

Miraculously the ropes came in without a hitch, and I was soon front-pointing down some steep mixed ground, intoxicated by the speed of progress, and bewildered by the maze of shattered pillars and steep snow which the tired torch revealed. After an abseil No. 5 gully was reached.

Festooned with gear I unloaded outside the hut at 12.30 a.m. The door was locked and no one stirred. Under the barrage of Mars bars, exhaustion had retreated and I felt loth to disturb the occupants under false pretences. Then came a vision of my sleeping bag in the valley - nobody could deny me that.

The walk was long and slow. It seemed entirely appropriate to finish in a deeper solitude than on the climb. My mind, relieved of all pressures, remained strangely passive. I made no impression on the vastness of the landscape, and it made no demands on me. I shared the night with the mountain, the still air and the silent valley.

Back in Glen Nevis I followed the river bank for three quarters of a mile before realizing that the bridge was the other way. Quarter past three, the last ruddy straw. No more Mars bars. Exhaustion overwhelmed me and I settled down to bivouac. The mountain always has the last laugh. A flood of sudden mirth warmed me as I shared the joke.

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ALPINE NOTES DAVE IRONS

The Club held a successful meet in Courmayeur in the last two weeks of July. Weather was excellent. The group including friends of members such as Pete Boardman amounted to fifteen people. With the exception of the Fenton team, who decided it would be quicker to descend the Aig. de Trelatete by falling than by following more orthodox methods of descent (they sustained sufficient injury; Ros broke an arm; to safely ensure that they could spend their holiday enjoying themselves instead of climbing). The rest of the party spent much time above the valley. Peaks ascended included; Tour Ronde, Aig. de Trelatete, Grande Jorrasses, Aig. de Bionassay, Mont Blanc, Aig. de Rochefort, Dent Du Geant, Aig. de Croux, South Ridge-Noire Peutery (Lew & Pete), Pyramid du Tacul.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

There are none, which is not surprising, as we have never before run this feature, however, now that everyone knows this facility is available, there should be plenty for the next issue.

A TRIBUTE TO OUR JUNIOR MEMBERS

RON ELLIS and HENRY FOLKARD

1975 produced for the club, a superb crop of junior members. Indeed the club was re-inforced by these hardmen: Brian Gardner, Kevin Roberts and Paul Millward. Since joining the club, Brian has already been leading some notable routes in the pass, such as Cenotaph Corner and Cemetery Gates. Tremadoc did not escape his attention either, with such routes as First Slip surrendering to his climbing ability. Kevin I am told, made a good second on the Corner and the Gates. On one of their Scottish expeditions Kevin and Brian together climbed the fine ascent of the Old Man of Stoer. Paul finds his pleasure leading at H.V.S. and last summer spent a happy Alpine holiday, climbing with his Father.

CLUB NEWS SECRETARY

Some recent Committee news. In June 1975 the Trustees for the Clubs cottage, Tyn-Lon were changed at the suggestion of several Committee members. Having contacted the Clubs solicitor to discover who the past Trustees were, it was discovered that two of the three had long ceased to be members of the Ceunant Mountaineering Club, Mary Kahn, a life member, was the only current member. However, the Committee agreed that the trustees ought to be persons more actively involved with Club affairs. The newly elected Trustees therefore are:

Mr. Derrick Grimmit, Mr. John Beddard, Mr. Roger Laville

The following new members were elected in 1975:

Bob Boden, Kevin Roberts (Junior), Brian Gardner (Junior)
David Higgs, John Eames, Frank Millward,
Miss Kate Ashcroft, Henry Folkard, Colin Street,
Dave Luscombe, Chris Morris, Paul Millward (Junior)

The B.M.C. were contacted and asked for their opinions on the Clubs responsibility for its Junior Members. They suggested that the Club draw up a sort of indemnity form absolving the club from responsibility and that the form must be signed by the parent of the Junior Member concerned.

Major work carried out on Tyn-Lon this year included the complete re-wiring of the hut. This after long debate was decided a priority. It was agreed that the work be done professionally. The cost worked out at about £150.

SKI-ING TERMS EXPLAINED BY THE EDITOR

- 90 Metre Jump* - An Olympic apres-ski record.
- Snow Plough Turn* - A turn where the legs are kept apart.
- Parallel Turn* - A snow plough turn when your boot clips jam together.
- Jet Turn* - Normally only achieved by air line pilots and air hostesses.
- Carved Turn* - A turn where you are kept on edge all the time.
- Fall Line* - The line taken by a falling skier.
- Piste* - A French word meaning the track from the bar to your hotel room.
- Mogul* - An eastern potentate sitting in the middle of the piste.
- Tee-bar* - An American expression meaning caff'.
- Ski binding* - A married couple ski-ing together.
- Wedging* - Getting in the queue for a ski tow.

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SAYINGS J. W. PETTET

"Climbers always bring back their dead". Clint Eastwood in the film - The Eiger Sanction.

"He frantically grabbed my hand from below, while Ken held my belt. Slowly our hands slipped apart and he fell." - Paddy at Beeston Tor.

"This year's gonna be my big come-back". Well known Ceunant darts player.

"Don't forget your rods and squash gear this weekend". Married Ceunant member.

"Yeh, we had to use five slings for direct aid at one point". Ceunant extreme leader on "diff" (name supplied).

" . . . did 103 routes at Stannage on Sunday . . . " (professed uncompetitive member).

"I put my left foot on the right foothold, and my right foot on left foothold. I then placed my left hand on the right handhold and my right hand on the left handhold, and then fell off. (Big "D" on Brant Direct).

"Bridging at maximum span he let out a high pitched scream and pushed them back with one hand (comment about part time teetotal member).

AGUILLE DE BIONASSY MONT BLANC

BY DAVE IRONS

I wanted to climb Mont Blanc, I suggested to Tim that a fine way of doing so would be to follow the frontier ridge from the Durier Refuge over the superb Aguille de Bionassy. Tim as ever, was very enthusiastic, Jon and Elaine also wanted to do the Blanc but didn't fancy the long slog up the ordinary route from the Gonella hut, so I suggested they join us to make a party of four. Joe and Dave hearing of our plans took interest and then we were six. So we packed our sacks, but transport was a problem as the hut walk begins at Lac Combal.

On our trip up the Trelatete, Garth had his car vandalised while parked at Lac Combral, and for this reason no one was keen to leave their car parked at the lake. Fortunately, however, entrenched opposite the campsite was a contingent of one of the lowest forms of life on this planet 'Pongo's' themselves engaged on a Mont Blanc expedition. After months of effort and several dozen casualties I believe they reached the Vallot hut from where they were rescued - a fair effort. We conned them into transporting our party up to Lac Combal by Land Rover and on the way the driver repeatedly pointed out various vertical scree slopes that he had apparently driven his Land Rover up. So it was with tears in our eyes that we were deposited at the Lac and set off on the five hour walk to the Durier.

One traverses the whole Miage glacier, first over bouldery moraine, then dry ice until after three hours or so you reach the steep, crevassed slopes that lead to the Col de Miage on which the hut is situated. Dave Stokes had not been well the few days previously and at this point he decided to return leaving us a party of five.

Joe joined Jon and Elaine and after putting on crampons we started up the slope. Negotiating the serried ranks of lateral crevasses took some effort, but we headed over right to the right of a dividing rock buttress, and then awkward progress was made one side or the other of the bergschrund, between the rock buttress and the chaotic upper Miage glacier on our right. Finally, above this 'mess' steep snow led to the col. Tim surprised two Austrians by sprinting into the hut unroped, in singlet and shorts despite the icy wind and swirling mist. The hut was fine, although a little cramped for seven people but we managed admirably of course.

Throughout the night the low cloud persisted, making an early start uninviting so we stayed in bed. Sometime after 4 a.m., however, the clouds parted and showed a clear starlit sky above. Hasty breakfast, then off up the mountain. The up route is via the South Ridge, an hours scrambling over icy scree brought us to the snow arete as the dawn came fully up. The mountain was in excellent condition. We were delayed a little on the terminal buttress as Joe grappled with overhanging, ice coated rock, but the Austrians following us found the correct route, so we abandoned Joe to his heroics and continued the ascent. On reaching the summit, Jon announced that there was no summit! The ice arete at the top was knife-edged and the mountain dropped away impressively the other side. Without halting we moved on down the very slender East Ridge which because of the excellent snow was easy and enjoyable, until we found an outcrop of rocks just above the Col de Bionnassay with room for us all to assemble and eat a second breakfast. We had done the nice part of the day. Ahead of us now stood Mont Blanc "miles above". We were too strong a team now ever to be turned back to the mere exhausting unpleasantness of endless hours of slogging up endless snowslopes and in no time at all we had crossed the Dome du Gouter climbing on the way a number of pleasant snow aretes. At this point "peaches" the magic word the very embodiment of all things good and desirable we espied to our left, just lying in the snow. Elaine became the victim of a tug-of-war match, roped as she was between Jon and Joe in eagerness to reap some reward for their labours. Unfortunately the much desired little fruit turned out to be mere lemon peel. Little did the company know that in my rucksack I carried a bag full of peaches and in the circumstances, fearing for my life I kept my mouth shut. From this point on the real work began, on past the Vallot Hut, on and forever on until, gasping, the roof of the world was reached. There I devoured my peaches warding off hands that threatened to strangle me. As we were all (except Tim of course) feeling ill we rapidly descended until down

past the Dome, where once again the atmosphere has some oxygen in it.

Further down, the ridge leading to the Dome glacier required caution as by now the snow was soft. The Dome glacier was deep snow and unpleasant, made all the more so as Tim insisted on falling down it dragging me with him. I must admit it was quicker than walking! We found the Gonella hut infested with khaki monkeys crawling in and out of windows, dancing on the roof, jabbering incomprehensibly.

After a quick brew we decided to quit the place for the sanity of the valley, it having been our intention to stay overnight. It was a tiring walk down but three and a half hours later Elaine ran into camp ahead of us announcing our triumph. It had been a good day.

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OBITUARIES

One evening in January 1975, Dave Luscombe came to my home, and asked to speak to me. I discovered he had recently arrived in Birmingham, an ex-student of Oxford University. His reason for coming to see me was climbing. He informed me that he had some small experience on the rock but was very keen, and had learned about the Ceunant Club through a climbing magazine. After a visit to our clubroom he decided he would like to join up with us, and so we made our way down to Tyn-Lon the following weekend, Saturday being a perfect winter day I suggested an expedition to Cwm-Glass, and on to the Parsons Nose, Dave gave me an excellent lead on this, as he did the preceding day when he took me up Scramblers Gate. Details of our routes will be found in the log book at Tyn-Lon. Dave was a genuine and ambitious lad, and perhaps, but for an unfortunate accident he would have realised all his ambitions, an avalanche on Mont Blanc cost him his life.

Ron Ellis

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CHARLIE WILLOT

A much liked member of the Cave and Crag Club died recently after an illness, Charlie was a pillar of the Cave and Crag and several members of the Ceunant will remember him.

continued . . .

He was a great climbing companion, always willing to pass on to his less gifted friends the benefit of his experience.

His tremendous enthusiasm, even after a serious operation a few years ago was an example to all who knew him.

The Cave and Crag have lost a good friend and we extend every sympathy to his friends and family.

R. Laville

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